



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Curbside Recycling Tips (FAQs)

Q. What can I recycle in the blue bin?

A. To make it easier to remember, we have adopted the Keep it Short and Simple (KISS) rule for recycling. Give us your cardboard, paper, bottles, jars, and cans. Any item that fits into these categories is recyclable. In addition, disposable aluminum bake ware and foil can be recycled in the blue bin. Remember that an aerosol can that had contained hazardous waste cannot be recycled, and paper products must be free of food waste, pet waste, oil or excessive dirt. For those who want more details, see the flyer at <http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/pdf/newcurbflyer.pdf>

Q. What types of plastics can I recycle in the blue bin?

A. The rule for recycling is to recycle all your empty bottles, jugs and jars, regardless of the number in the triangle. However, other types of plastic containers, such as dairy tubs, clamshells, and microwave food trays are not accepted, again regardless of their identification number. Plastic containers with indented necks and screw-on caps are made by a blow-molded process. Other plastics are made by injection molding, and the different process makes them incompatible for recycling with bottles, jugs and jars. Few manufacturers use recovered injection molded containers in new production, so collecting these items for recycling would impose a cost on the program and the City does not have funds for those extra costs.

Q. Do food and beverage containers such as bottles and cans have to be washed out for recycling?

A. No. Save the water and do not wash out your bottles and jars. Just make sure that any excess product is removed by dumping it out and scraping off the sides if necessary. The recycled materials will undergo a thorough washing while being processed for manufacturing.

For folks who prefer to wash out their containers to deter smell and bugs, reduce water consumption by using the clean-up water after washing your cooking utensils.

Q. Should I remove the labels from containers for recycling?

A. No, there is no need to remove the labels. They will be removed as the materials are processed for manufacturing.

Q. We get every-other week recycling collection from the City, and because so much of our waste is recyclable, we overflow our blue bin on a regular basis. How can I get another recycling container?

A. If you are a City residential trash customer, there are three sizes of recycling containers

for you to choose from: 32, 64, and 96 gallon sizes. There are two ways you can get an additional blue bin or trade a smaller blue bin for a larger size. You can have it delivered to your home for a \$25 delivery fee or pick it up yourself at Collection Services at no charge. Call ESD Customer Services at 858-694-7000 to place your request. Residents may have a maximum of three recycling containers per home unless special authorization for more is granted.

If you will be picking up your bin you will need to bring proof that you live in the city of San Diego. If your driver's license shows a different address, a utility bill or water bill, along with a picture ID will be sufficient. You will be responsible for safely securing your container if you are using an open bed truck. The bin will be picked up at:

Collection Services 8353 Miramar Place San
Diego, CA 92121 Monday through Friday,
from 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.
Closed on Holidays

Q. Are the bottle caps and jar lids recyclable?

A. Bottle caps and jar lids are a small part of the waste stream, but can cause big problems if improperly recycled. All plastic caps and lids should be discarded in the trash as they are normally a different plastic from the bottle and not recyclable.

Metal caps and lids from beverage containers and food jars can be recycled. However the tops of food cans should be stuck back down into their cans. Their sharp edges can be a hazard for recycling workers and their flat profile can cause them to slip between belts and gears to damage the processing equipment. Try leaving a small part of the top attached to the can and then fold it into the can for recycling.

Q. Are there types of paper that I should NOT recycle in the blue bin?

A. Soiled paper is not accepted in the blue bin. Also, chemically treated paper such as photographs, blue prints, and NCR (No Carbon Required) paper are not accepted. Sticky notes cannot be recycled.

Q. Can I recycle advertisements that come in the mail and with the newspaper?

A. Yes, recycle all junk mail and advertising. Be sure to remove any compact disks or product samples that might be enclosed.

Q. Can I recycle gift wrapping paper?

A. Yes, gift wrap made of paper is recyclable. But metallic or plastic wrapping paper should be kept out of the blue bin.

Q. Do I have to remove things like staples, paper clips, and plastic windows to recycle paper?

A. No. The paper is turned into a watery pulp before it becomes a new product, and while the paper is in a pulp phase, non-fiber material will be removed by skimming, straining, and magnetic screening.

- Q. Can paper and cardboard with tape on it be recycled?
- A. Some tape is acceptable, but excessive tape can gum up production machinery and reduce operational efficiency, so you should try to remove as much tape as can easily be removed before recycling.
- Q. Are pizza boxes recyclable?
- A. Pizza boxes that are not heavily soiled with grease, cheese and food are recyclable. If the bottom is too soiled, the top might be OK to tear off and recycle.
- Q. Do I have to separate the different types of materials for recycling?
- A. No, do not separate the materials for recycling, with the exception of shredded paper. This needs to be placed in a bag before putting it in the blue bin. A paper bag is preferred, but will also be accepted in a plastic bag. All other materials should be placed loose in the blue recycling bin.
- Q. Why can't I recycle plastic bags in the curbside program?
- A. It is cost prohibitive to recycle plastic bags in the curbside program. The recycled bags have little value, and when collected in comingled programs they get badly contaminated, decreasing their value further. There are virtually no markets in the U.S. for curbside recovered plastic bags. A bigger problem with collecting plastic bags curbside is that they get wound up in collection and processing equipment, requiring maintenance that costs money and time, and creates inefficiencies for processing all the recyclables.

Returning plastic bags to your supermarket is the most effective way to recycle them. The plastics stay clean and recyclable. The clean bags are backhauled to the chains' warehouses where they are baled and returned to the original bag suppliers with whom they have closed loop contracts for the recycling of the shopping bags. Even better is to bring your own reusable bags when you shop.

- Q. Can I recycle packing peanuts?
- A. You cannot put packing peanuts in your blue recycling bin. However many mail houses such as UPS, Mailboxes, Etc. and FedEx will take them for reuse. Always call a business to confirm their current policy. Also, call the Peanut Hotline at 1-800-828-2214 for additional businesses that take packing peanuts.
- Q. What happens to the recyclables after the City collects them?
- A. The City contracts with two companies to process and market the materials collected in the curbside program: IMS Recycling Services (<http://www.imsrecyclingservices.com/>) and Allan Co. (<http://www.allancompany.com/facilityaddresses.htm>). These companies operate Materials Recovery Facilities that sort out the comingled materials for recycling through a series of manual and mechanical sorting.

First the material moves down conveyor belts past workers who pull off cardboard for recycling and contaminants for disposal. Then the material moves over a disk screen

and air classifier that allows containers to fall through to another conveyor belt that moves to a magnet to take out steel food cans and sends plastics down one conveyor belt where more workers sort the types of plastic into their categories and glass down another line to be sorted by color. The paper gets separated into newsprint and mixed paper and travels on conveyor belts where workers further refine and clean the material. For a virtual tour of the Allan Company facility, visit:

<http://www.allancompany.com/slideshow/recycleprocess.htm>.

The processors market the materials to end users who turn them into new products: paper into new paper products, packaging and furniture; plastic into containers, clothing, carpet, plastic lumber, flower pots, car parts and more; aluminum into drink cans, airplanes, car parts...anything made out of aluminum; food cans into anything that steel is made from, including car parts, machinery, building materials, etc.; glass into new glass containers, decorative tiles, road reflectors, jewelry, tableware, and more. For a guide to many recycled products, visit <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RecycleStore/>

For information about yard waste recycling:

For Curbside Collection visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/newgreenery.shtml>

For the Miramar Greenery visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/miramar/greeneryrecycle.shtml>

For backyard composting visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/composting.shtml>

For information about apartment and condominium recycling, visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/ro/residential/index.shtml#apt>

For information about business recycling visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/business.shtml>

For information about Construction and Demolition (C&D) recycling visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/recycling/cdrecycling.shtml>

For information about household hazardous waste disposal, lead and asbestos abatement, and appliance and electronics recycling, visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/ep/index.shtml>

For information about trash collection visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/collection/index.shtml>

For information about energy conservation and alternative energy, visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/energy/index.shtml>

For information about environmental sustainability visit:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/sustainable/index.shtml>

For other environmental, waste and recycling information, please call 858-694-7000.

